

Because Sometimes True Fidelity Lies in the Courage to Dissent

JOIN US AS WE WITNESS FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY IN MINISTRY

Holy Thursday
March 24, 2016 10:45 AM
STANDING TOGETHER
FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Ordination Day
May 21, 2016 9:30 AM
EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY
LED BY A WOMAN

18th & Race Streets
(Near the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul)
Philadelphia, PA
For Information, 215-545-9649

	EQUAL	Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area
Vol. XXXIII No. 1		MARCH 2016 - JUNE 2016
	WRITES	MISSION STATEMENT - <i>As women and men rooted in faith, we call for justice, equality, and full partnership in ministry. We are committed to church renewal and to the transformation of a structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry.</i>

STANDING WITH, FOR, AND AS THE BELOVED

On the Sunday of the Baptism of Jesus in which he is told he is God's beloved, our priest asked all of us: "How do you know you are beloved? What is it in *your* life that tells you so?"

In inviting you, once again, to turn out in prayerful force to the Holy Thursday witness for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, we turn to these very questions and propose, perhaps, the most significant answer: We know we are beloved because people tell us that we are and they tell us by showing up for us.

Someone called to priesthood, to ministry, and denied the fulfillment of that call, may feel at the same time both beloved (because of the call from God) and bereft (because of the reaction of the church). This year, in our invitation for you to join us in these witnesses, we focus on what it means to her just to have us show up and what it might mean – to her, to all of us, to the future of reform of the church - if no one did.

This year's **Holy Thursday Witness** will be on **March 24 at 10:45am** at Sister Cities Park across from the Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul in Philadelphia.

CENSORS AND KILLJOYS

We know who they are! They are even "on parade" on Holy Thursday and Ordination Day at the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul in Philadelphia! They censor our rituals; they kill the joy of our celebrations by denying access, based solely on gender, to ministry and, most egregiously, to a holy Sacrament.

I read a passage in a delightful little book called *44 Scotland Street* by Alexander McCall Smith. The character was speaking about the established church in Scotland, but oh, how it applied to our own: "Well, now there are all sorts of censors and killjoys. Earnest, ignorant people who lecture us on what we can think and say. And do you know, we've laid down and submitted to the whole process. It's been the most remarkable display of passivity. With the result that when we encounter anybody who thinks independently, or who doesn't echo the received wisdoms of the day, we're astonished."

A second character brings it home: "In such a way freedom of thought is lost, by small cuts. By small acts of disapproval. By a thousand discouragements of spirit."

That last sentence boldly states how it may work with our own established hierarchy — *if* we let it. Instead, let's resist; let's act; let's keep on astonishing them all! Join us for our annual **Ordination Day Mass** at Sister Cities Park across from Saints Peter & Paul Basilica on **Saturday, May 21 at 9:30am**. It is led by a woman blessed in sacramental love. Astonishing!

EqualwRites is a publication of Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference

Our 2016 Mary Magdalene Award Honoree

By *Judith A. Heffernan*

I met Rev. Robin Hynicka at a Lenten series some years ago. He was one of the pastors of four Methodist congregations in Frankford, whose pastors and people together made up exceptionally welcoming, caring, delightful, prayerful people of faith. (I experienced the most meaningful and personally touching Ash Wednesday service I have ever attended—but that’s another story!)

Robin, is an enthusiastic, encouraging, challenging, joyous, loving person and outstanding liturgist and preacher, who practices what he preaches.

We weren’t the only ones who recognized that Robin, imbued with the Spirit, was a great gift to us all. He was next appointed the pastor of the renowned Arch Street United Methodist Church in Center City Philadelphia.

I had initially wondered if Robin would have to settle in and be more staid in his new position. Of course, I had to say to myself, “Judy, this is Robin! That’s not gonna happen!” And sure enough, when Philadelphians were suffering and trying to deal with any justice issues, where were they invited? When people needed a welcoming place to meet, dialogue and pray, where did they go? Yep! Arch Street United Methodist Church.

Let me give you a recent example: a Philadelphia Catholic parish had invited the families and friends of LGBTI people to come and share the parish space for workshops, rest, refreshment and prayer during the World Meeting of Families. Then not very long before the conference, the Archdiocese required the parish to rescind the invitation—and it did!!!

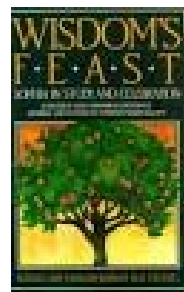
Where could the people go on such short notice? What could they possibly do? You guessed it! Robin happily welcomed them to Arch Street United Methodist Church.

The Sunday before the World Meeting of Families, Catholic Organizations for Renewal sponsored a prayer service for the renewal of the church. Women’s Ordination Worldwide and Women’s Ordination Conference had a soul stirring march to Sister Cities Park and joined Catholic Organizations for Renewal people and representatives from interreligious communities.

We were joined by women ministers whose words and blessings touched our hearts. And there, in the back, singing his heart out was Robin. I was moved to introduce Robin to the assembled, and I told him how much I love him and that I think of him as an honorary woman minister! He happily said loudly, “IACCEPT!”

Robin always encourages people to say “Amen”! Robin we are so happy you are our Mary Magdalene Award recipient and we say, “AMEN”!

Judith Heffernan, M.Div. is a member of the *SEPAWOC* Core Committee.



Wisdom’s Feast Book Event April 9

We are pleased to announce a celebration of the 30th anniversary of Marian Ronan’s ground-breaking book (co-authored with Hal Taussig and Susan Cole) *Wisdom’s Feast: Sophia in Study and Celebration* on **Saturday, April 9 from 2 to 4 PM**. Published originally in 1986 as *Sophia the Future of Feminist Spirituality*, with a second edition, *Wisdom’s Feast*, including study, worship and spirituality resources, following in 1989, the book was one of the first explorations of Sophia (Wisdom) as the feminine face of God.

The celebration will include comments by Marian, Hal and Susan on Sophia scholarship, spirituality, and politics since 1986 as well as a book signing. Refreshments will be served.

The event will be held in the chapel of the Arch Street United Methodist Church in Center City (55 N. Broad St., Philadelphia) and is co-sponsored by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference and the Philadelphia Grail Community.

(The new edition of *Wisdom’s Feast* is available on Amazon Books; enter *Wisdom’s Feast* Apocryphile Press in the search space).

Editorial Staff of *EqualwRites*

A Publication of SEPAWOC

Editors: **Ellie Harty, Mary Whelan**

Book Review Editor: **Marian Ronan**

Regular Columnists: **Judith A. Heffernan, Marian Ronan**

YES!
By Ellie Harty

Okay, this is a blatant pep talk, as much to myself as anyone else. If you are feeling discouraged or just drained after forty years of advocating for women's leadership in the church, well, me, too – and I've only been doing this for ten years or so. Thank God, literally, for those who never seem to be discouraged. This is also a tribute to them.

I'm beginning with a poem by Sylvia Plath that I found strangely appropriate and even uplifting (not Plath's strong suit if you know her work and life story at all!) for this season of Lent transitioning into Easter. I like it because it is so unsparingly unsentimental and incorporates some of the Good Friday-like doubt and desperation we sometimes feel and only the glimmer of hope which is all we can sometimes muster:

Black Rook in Rainy Weather by Sylvia Plath

*On the stiff twig up there
Hunches a wet black rook
Arranging and rearranging its feathers in the rain.
I do not expect a miracle
Or an accident*

*To set the sight on fire
In my eye, not seek
Any more in the desultory weather some design,
But let spotted leaves fall as they fall,
Without ceremony, or portent.*

*Although I admit, I desire,
Occasionally, some backtalk
From the mute sky, I can't honestly complain:
A certain minor light may still
Leap incandescent*

*Out of the kitchen table or chair
As if a celestial burning took
Possession of the most obtuse objects now and then —
Thus hallowing an interval
Otherwise inconsequent*

*By bestowing largesse, honor,
One might say love. At any rate, I now walk
Wary (for it could happen
Even in this dull, ruinous landscape); sceptical,
Yet politic; ignorant*

*Of whatever angel may choose to flare
Suddenly at my elbow. I only know that a rook
Ordering its black feathers can so shine
As to seize my senses, haul
My eyelids up, and grant*

*A brief respite from fear
Of total neutrality. With luck,
Trekking stubborn through this season
Of fatigue, I shall
Patch together a content*

*Of sorts. Miracles occur,
If you care to call those spasmodic
Tricks of radiance miracles. The wait's begun again,
The long wait for the angel.
For that rare, random descent.*

I am one who does call “those spasmodic tricks of radiance” miracles, and I do not mind waiting for the angels of hopefulness to descend. I don't want to miss a minute of their presence.

The wait for some angels is, however, as we know, sometimes very long. The angel in charge of ensuring justice for women, for leadership for women in the Catholic church could certainly get a move on; the one in charge of women's ordination needs to rise and shine and fly – now! Of course, what I am really talking about is the better angels of our own natures: It is we who need to get a move on, to rise, shine, and fly.

We could start, I've been thinking, by saying the simple word “yes”. I was reading a review of the new book by Shonda Rhimes (of television's *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal* fame). It's called *The Year of Yes*. Never mind what is actually in the book, it was the title that intrigued me. I started to think how often I have said “no” to truly important things, like opportunities to work for justice in the world, for equality, for the environment, for the oppressed. I can fairly easily be tapped for money, but to actually get out there and protest, march, witness, support speakers and activists and advocates by making the effort to attend their events, to appreciate, applaud, not to mention join in their efforts is so easily coopted by a cozy couch, an enthralling read, a lively conversation, and, yes (and not in a good way!), favorite TV show. Night, cold, distance sometimes seem insurmountable barriers.

In a world in which so many greater barriers to wellness, enrichment, enhancement of life, to hope and grace and love exist, mine (ours?) seem so very, very surmountable, easily overcome by something as simple as the word “yes”. “Yes” makes us stand with others, cheer them on, even extend a hand to help them climb over, or, even better, knock those barriers down forever.

Of course, nothing is that easy. Sometimes we are too tired or too discouraged or disillusioned, or just too fed up to say “yes” again, to see the world through the eyes of a “yes”. On a Sunday in early January, the reading from Isaiah describes each one of us as a “bruised reed” and “smoldering wick”. I thought he/she is not talking just about the oppressed but of we who try to do the work of justice and peace. But the reading went on: That “bruised reed” will not be broken; that “smoldering wick” will not be snuffed “until God establishes justice on the earth.” In fact, the “coastlands will wait for

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Pope Francis and Catholic Gender Ideology

By Marian Ronan

As the pope's visit to Philadelphia and the final session of the Synod on the Family recede into memory, disagreements continue concerning Pope Francis's positions on certain issues. Did the pope's comments on religious freedom at Independence Hall signify support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) religious freedom campaign? Will the pope, in his forthcoming apostolic exhortation on the family, permit divorced and remarried Catholics to receive communion? Does "mercy" extend to women and LGBTI Catholics?

The public statements and actions of popes are significant, of course. But they can also be confusing and inconsistent, especially when the pope in question is more pastoral than ideological. So it can be helpful to move beyond the ambiguity of public comments to examine papal writings. *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's June encyclical, sheds light not only on his position on the environment, but on gender and sexuality as well.

At one level, the pope's encyclical on the intrinsically connected issues of environmental degradation and poverty may seem to reinforce the institutional church's fierce condemnation of contraception. A week after the encyclical was issued, for example, Jamie Manson, writing in the *National Catholic Reporter*, singled out overpopulation as an issue that is "woefully underdeveloped in the encyclical."

Manson finds problematic, in particular, Pope Francis's suggestion that rising population is "fully compatible with an integral and shared development," as well as his claim that blaming "population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some is one way of refusing to face the issues."

Manson by no means disputes the Pope's assertion that a radical change in consumerist mentality is fundamental to feeding the massively expanding populations in the Global South. But she explains that these are long term goals, whereas increasing access to reproductive education and contraceptives will have a much more immediate impact on those who suffer some of our world's worst deprivations.

The statistics and reports Manson cites in her article are compelling. I join her in wishing that the Catholic Church would lift its ban on contraceptives and thus greatly improve, and sometimes save, the lives of poor women globally.

But Manson's assertion that Pope Francis wouldn't be breaking radically new ground by changing the church's teaching on birth control is problematic, even naive. It's likely that Pope Francis shares the teachings of his predecessors on contraception, abortion, gay marriage, and other sex/gender issues, but whether he does or not, changing such teaching would risk starting a civil war in the church. Indeed, Ross Douthat speculated in the *New York Times* in September that Francis intends to start a civil war in the church over divorce and remarriage.

To understand why explicit changes in Catholic teaching on contraception, divorce, and gay marriage, never mind

abortion, are currently off the table, it's helpful to recall that at Vatican II the church made some historic concessions to "the modern world." These include acknowledging the right to religious freedom and abandoning its claim that it is necessary to be a Catholic in order to be saved.

But no institution willingly gives up power. So instead of abandoning its claims to absolute truth, the church shifted its claim to such truth from the area of doctrine to that of "faith and morals." "Morals," within this new economy, are obligatory for all because they inhere in what the church calls the natural law. Thus the post-Vatican II church placed increasing emphasis on sexuality and gender.

Here in the United States, the increasing focus on sexual teaching came about gradually, with the bishops appointed during and soon after Vatican II also speaking passionately on justice, peace, the environment and the poor. Yet in the years that followed, the emphasis of the institutional church in the U.S. and elsewhere shifted steadily toward sex/gender teaching.

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis does not change Catholic sexual teaching in light of the environmental crisis. Doing so risks, among other things, massively shifting attention away from that crisis to pelvic issues, the last thing the pope has in mind. And indeed, Pope Francis does refer occasionally in the encyclical to the harms of abortion and lack of respect for life.

What's remarkable about *Laudato Si'* is that in it Pope Francis connects abortion, population control, and lack of respect for life with a range of other sins against creation. That is to say, he stresses the integral connection between "the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the poor... buying the organs of the poor for resale, or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted. This same use and throw away logic" Pope Francis tells us, "generates so much waste because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary." (123)

Progressive Catholics are not the only ones critical of *Laudato Si'*, of course, and critical even of the implications of Pope Francis's words for the absolute truth of Catholic sexual teaching. In an article in the *New Yorker* about her participation in a two-day Vatican conference about the encyclical, environmentalist Naomi Klein reports on a fear among conservatives in Rome that the encyclical's discussion of "planetary overburden will lead to a weakening of the Church's position on birth control and abortion." She also quotes the editor of a popular Italian Catholic Web site: "the road the church is heading down is precisely this: To quietly approve population control while talking about something else."

Other conservatives are subtler in their critique of Pope Francis's handling of Catholic sex and gender ideology. In a column ostensibly praising *Laudato Si'* that appeared in the July 22 issue of the Brooklyn Catholic newspaper, the *Tablet*, the Bishop of Brooklyn, Nicholas DiMarzio, writes that "the environment that is most dangerous to human beings and the one which causes the most direct threat is the misunderstanding of contraception and population control."

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A Vision of the Church

By Eileen DiFranco

While campaigning for mayor of Atlanta, candidate Kassem Reed visited an elderly woman and took great pains to highlight the wonderful, gentrified Atlanta that he wanted to improve even more once he was elected. He excitedly told her about the new restaurants, the improved train service, and the upgraded airport. His vision of Atlanta was that of a world class city. Reed expected the woman to share in his excitement, but she was distinctly unimpressed. Instead, she took Reed outside to show him her Atlanta, a place where grown men gambled in unfilled swimming pools and sold drugs from gazebos where families used to picnic. She didn't take the train because she feared riding the bus that took her to the train station.

The woman completely deflated Reed's ego, but he listened to her side of the story. He saw her vision and felt her pain and fear. Once elected, Reed acted on the woman's vision of Atlanta. He filled those pools and got rid of the drug dealers so kids could swim and eat their lunch peacefully in the gazebo with their parents. Reed said that the woman's vision changed his life.

Like the mayor of Atlanta, the Catholic hierarchy also has a vision. Pope Francis would have us believe that the church's vision is one of mercy. He can, indeed, point to hospitals and schools and missionary activity that help the poor as examples of the church's goodness and lovingkindness. Many Catholics console themselves with this warm and cozy vision of "Holy, Mother Church," a kind and benevolent institution, forgiving all, that welcomes and loves everyone who walks through its doors, an institution that behaves just like your own mother. That vision, however, is a day dream, a pretty picture that takes an institution with a proven addiction to pomp and power and papers over it with fluff and nonsense. Allow me, an "excommunicated" woman priest to take you on a guided tour of what the Catholic Church is to far too many people.

Rather than a kind, loving, sacrificing mother, the Catholic Church is, in fact, the Church Triumphant that prides itself on adherence to undemocratic principles because it claims to know the mind of God and follows divine will. To prove this point, the princes (yes, they regard themselves as princes and are addressed with the title of "Your Eminence") of the church assemble in massive cathedrals or in well-appointed hotels wearing elaborate vestments and huge crowns or watered silk cassocks with red silk cummerbunds- paid for by the laity -in order to impress the non-ordained with their power and circumstance. From these positions of power, they make life-altering decisions about the laity who live in a very different plane of existence.

Unlike the people over whom they rule, some live like the 1% in huge mansions with a staff that makes their dinners, cleans their homes, and washes their clothes. They have comprehensive health insurance, very generous vacation time, and a well-stocked wine cellar. They are neither hungry nor cold. Although different in degree from his predecessors, Pope Francis lives the life of the rich and famous. He hardly "smells" like his sheep.

Unlike Kassem Reed, neither the pope nor the princes or the majority of their obedient underling clerics make much of an effort to engage the faithful in anything that resembles a

meaningful conversation about the latter's role in the church or the world. If an honest conversation does occur, it ultimately returns back to the institutional party line which few clerics are willing to breach, at least in public, lest they lose their clerical privilege which sets them apart and above their lay counterparts. A comfy lifestyle with many perks is difficult to replace in a lay world where ability rather than caste is rewarded. It is easier to talk around the edges and pretend that the church is a kind and holy mother who really loves her children.

Rather than conversations, members of the hierarchy as well as many clerics preach and threaten and condemn. Far too many use the Eucharist as a weapon to bludgeon people for daring to be different. Even at funeral masses, traumatized people are directed by too many clerics NOT to receive the Eucharist. Many bishops hunt people down who disagree with them. Some fire people and take away their pensions, in spite of the command of the pope to act with mercy.

Dr. Patricia Fresen of South Africa was summarily kicked out of the Dominicans on a directive by the Vatican after serving God and her order for over forty years. With no job, no money, no pension, no health insurance, and no support, she was forced to move to Germany and begin her life all over again at age 65. Not one Dominican raised her voice in protest. Nor did any of the priests or seminarians she taught. They were all afraid. Not one has sent a penny to support her. What did Dr. Fresen do to deserve such a punishment? She was ordained a priest. Contrast her treatment with the kid glove care extended to pedophile priests.

The institutional church would also have the rest of us believe that it is the spotless bride of Christ who is incapable of error and holds her robes far above a culture that might soil her. It is, then, a perfect society. Thus, there is no need to listen to anyone except the members of the club. Nor is there any need to change or grow or adapt to a society it basically disdains and whose legitimate concerns are rejected as petty or sinful. Those members of the clerical club who disagree are shunned or kicked out of the brotherhood. Women like me get "excommunicated."

No one is safe in this church in spite of its call to mercy; neither the ordained nor the laity and certainly not gay people, the divorced or women who raise their voices. Institutional spies comb web sites, marriage registries, and even Facebook for traitors to the faith. They attend allegedly dissident liturgies and report all discrepancies back to their bishops. All must conform their consciences to that of their bishop or else. Those who have lived blameless lives and worked for the church in love and faithfulness get kicked to the curb for not following official policy.

Yet, the faithful continues to support them and pay for their ongoing and unapologetic acts of intimidation and willful blindness because of a sense of community or ownership or in the hope that the church will change in the distant future. This support has unintended consequences that causes collateral damage to the most vulnerable. Yes, the institution might run hospitals. But it fails to provide medically necessary health care for pregnant women and to women in general. The bishops' guidelines would allow a pregnant woman to die rather than perform a medically necessary abortion to save her life. It refuses to recognize the value and necessity of contracp-

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TREASURER'S REPORT

SEPAWOC Financial Statement for Calendar Year 2015

Beginning balance (1-1-15)	\$ 2306.93
Revenues (donations)	\$ 8323.00
Total	\$10629.93
Expenses	
<u>Printing</u>	\$ 6631.50
<u>Postage, permits,</u>	
<u>Mailbox rental</u>	\$ 1046.46
<u>Events</u>	\$ 349.37
<u>Memberships</u>	\$ 175.00
<u>Bank fees</u>	\$ 7.19
Total Expenses	\$ 8209.51
Ending balance (12-31-15)	\$ 2420.42

Prepared by Mary E. Whelan

SEPAWOC Goals for 2016

Mary Hunt, in a paper distributed at the 2015 Women's Ordination Worldwide Conference, listed the movement's forty years' worth of accomplishments and pronounced the final accomplishment as, "We are just getting started!"

We at SEPAWOC (and that means you!) could not agree more. Get ready to begin a season of renewal and rebirth by saying YES:

To join and collaborate with other organizations (national and local COR, Women Church Convergence, Call to Action, WOC and WOW and so many more) in supporting actions promoting women's leadership and ordination in the church.

To inspire people to say "Yes" to attending Holy Thursday, Ordination Day and other witnesses for women's ordination.

To sponsor and encourage attendance at our April 9 event, a panel discussion by the authors in light of the re-release of the groundbreaking book, *Wisdom's Feast: Sophia in Study and Celebration*.

To encourage new writers and widen the readership of *EqualwRites*.

To promote the SEPAWOC webpage more widely.

To investigate setting up a Facebook page to promote the interchange of ideas, events, and commentary.

To conduct a day long summer SEPAWOC retreat.

And that is just the start!

Pope Francis and Catholic Gender Ideology

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A reader might be excused for concluding, in the context of an article praising the encyclical, that this is something Pope Francis says, or at least suggests.

But Pope Francis most certainly does not say this in *Laudato Si'*. Rather, he says that there is an integral connection between the dangers of abortion, contraception, climate change, other environmental destruction, and the oppression of the poor. That is, he dismantles the ideological hierarchy of recent decades, in which popes and bishops declared sex and gender offenses more grievous than any others and made social and environmental justice optional.

This is surely not the full change that Jamie Manson and I and many other progressive Catholics would like to see happen. But it's a change of some considerable significance nonetheless.

Marian Ronan is EqualwRites book review editor. The 30th anniversary of her co-authored book, *Wisdom's Feast: Sophia in Study and Celebration* is available on Amazon: enter "Wisdom's Feast Apocryphile Press" in the Amazon Search.

Community of the Christian Spirit

Committed to peace and social justice, CCS welcomes you to join in our Sunday morning celebrations, liturgies in the Roman Catholic tradition which explore Scripture and contemporary readings.

For information, call Roberta Brunner or Margaret McLaughlin, (215) 572-5623, or write P.O. Box 353, Abington, PA 19001

Book Reviews

***The Cruellest of All Mothers: Marie de l'Incarnation, Motherhood, and Christian Tradition* by Mary Dunn. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016. Hardback, \$45; e-book, \$44.99. 150 pp. plus back matter.**

Reviewed by Marian Ronan

For Catholic feminists, a book about the life of Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation, the little known French-Canadian Ursuline canonized in 2014, can't help but be welcome. As the title of Mary Dunn's remarkable new study suggests, however, *The Cruellest of All Mothers* is a good deal more than a saint's life.

Raised in Tours, France, Marie Guyart began having mystical encounters with Christ at the age of seven and longed to become a nun, but her parents forced her to marry. She did so in 1617, age eighteen. In 1619, she gave birth to a son, Claude, and six months later, her husband died.

Guyart spent most of the next eleven years raising her son, supporting them both by working in her brother-in-law's business, while continuing to long for the religious life. In 1631 she entered the Ursulines at Tours—all convents were cloistered in those days—over the strenuous objections of her son, who was left without visible means of support. Two years later, in a vision, the Virgin Mary told Marie she had plans for her in Canada. In 1639, Marie and three other Ursulines sailed to Quebec, where she spent the rest of her life.

Marie de l'Incarnation's ministry was impressive in many respects. She founded the Ursulines in Canada and served as their superior for eighteen years. She also learned multiple indigenous languages and translated the catechism into Iroquois. But the issue at the center of Dunn's analysis is Guyart's abandonment of her eleven-year-old son and the meaning(s) of that act in light of Christian perspectives on motherhood and contemporary scholarship. In chapter 1 Dunn "explicates" Marie's abandonment of Claude in the context of the times, that is, in the way that Marie herself was likely to have understood it: as a sacrifice performed in conformity with God's will, modeled after the crucifixion. Marie's deep desire to stay with her son would have been irrelevant. But in chapter 2, Dunn suggests that the abandonment may instead have been quite the opposite: a refusal on Marie's part to conform to the norms of seventeenth-century French family life, in which parents' greatest obligation was to protect the "patrimony" of their children.

But, Dunn reminds us, human actions rarely fall into neat, either/or categories, in this case, those of submission or resistance. Dunn therefore draws on the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to explore the abandonment as what was likely within the boundaries of Guyart's own time that "left little (positive) room for actual maternal bodies and real maternal practice." Fundamental to this world-view were centuries of Christian teaching in which motherhood itself was portrayed as fleshly and the renunciation of children as heroic. The seventeenth-century Christian privileging of self-sacrifice as the ultimate in spiritual practice reinforced these longstanding teachings. In her own time, then, Marie had little choice but to abandon Claude if she believed God had called her to the mystical life.

Dunn goes on to suggest, however, that in another time and place, Marie might have been able to understand motherhood itself, and not only its renunciation, as a sacrifice modeled on that of Christ. Now let me acknowledge at this point that feminist discussions of sacrifice in recent decades have been something of a minefield, with theologians like Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker denouncing Christian notions of sacrifice as inherently misogynistic, even sadistic. In her final chapter, however, Dunn uses the work of the French feminist psychoanalytic theorist Julia Kristeva to undercut such dismissals of sacrifice, embedded as they are in binary, Cartesian, either/or thinking. For Kristeva maternal subjectivity—itsself the model of all human subjectivity—

is a mother's willingness to "give herself up" in order to make room for the other within. (But) a mother's willingness to give herself up does not end in the annihilation of the mother in the service of others, but in the enrichment of the mother through the inclusion of the other (13).

In fact, as Dunn explains, Kristeva's understanding of motherhood folds into each other the pivotal categories that have been held in opposition throughout Western/Christian history: agape and eros, the Word and the flesh, syntax and rhythm, male and female. Furthermore, this Kristevan model of motherhood as sacrifice and fulfillment finds its closest analogue in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross because that sacrifice ended in life, not death, that is, in the Resurrection and the formation of the Christian community. Similarly, motherhood culminates in new life and profound connection. In fact, as the book continues, Dunn demonstrates that motherhood was infolded into Guyart's spirituality throughout her life despite—or because of—the abandonment of her son

Dunn's reading of motherhood in the life of Marie Guyart's life and in Christian history is itself a significant achievement. But Dunn introduces a third, galvanizing layer to her narrative: her own experience of motherhood, and especially, of mothering a child with a rare genetic disorder. Already half way through the introduction, Dunn writes about being the mother of two older children, Bobby and Frankie, three and one years old respectively, at a time when attitudes toward motherhood are very different from those of the sixteenth-century. Throughout the book, Dunn returns to this experience of mothering these two and then two more children, the last one, Aggie, born with the genetic disorder.

At first glance, there would seem to be few similarities between Dunn and Guyart. Dunn stays at home, devoting much time and attention to her children, and especially to Aggie. Yet a careful reading of Dunn's intermittent shifts from Guyart's motherhood to her own brings a certain similarity to the surface: Dunn also experiences

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Book Reviews

The Catholic Labyrinth: Power, Apathy, and a Passion for Reform in the American Church by Peter McDonough. Oxford University Press, 2013. 408 pp. Hardcover, \$31.95. Kindle, \$19.99.
Reviewed by Regina Bannan

If the excellent index is to be believed, *The Catholic Labyrinth: Power, Apathy, and a Passion for Reform in the American Church* should include lots about the Women's Ordination Conference. Thirteen mentions of women's ordination, plus 10 of feminism, 12 of gender issues, and one of priesthood, gender apartheid. But there is nothing about the organized movement for women's ordination except a few mentions of one Call to Action witness and consideration of FutureChurch. The biases of political scientist Peter McDonough are evident in his study of three groups with which I am very familiar and one I knew very little about. He wants groups that are loyal to the church and propose reforms that have clear, achievable objectives. WOC, Dignity, CORPUS and many others just don't fit his loyalty criterion. But, especially for those involved, his chapters about the four organizations he chooses are well worth reading.

The first, SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests), is presented as a successful if impoverished organization that confronts the church and also supports its members. The evolution of its boffo strategies of litigation and media work is carefully described, often through anecdotes and personalities. The most common misperception about SNAP is addressed clearly: that it is a secular organization looking at all clergy abusers, not just Catholics. Most people think it's only Catholic, and McDonough seems to think it should be. So not loyal but effective.

The second, VOTF (Voice of the Faithful), struggles according to both McDonough criteria. Trying to be loyal but not perceived as such, trying to be effective but with goals that are too diffuse to McDonough, VOTF's middle ground leaves it lost. He highlights the strength the movement gained in Boston because it was parish-based, but his argument that it found expansion difficult because of the parochialism of American Catholics is weak. Its Internet campaign worked in the shock of the sex abuse crisis, — 30,000 people signed up — but internal conflicts and lack of a business model derailed effective national organization, according to McDonough. Without that, membership never developed.

The third, the Leadership Roundtable, is the organization I knew little about. Of course, I am not surprised that it has all the advantages: It's wealthy, composed of executives (including bishops) well-known to each other, able to use business models, insistent on staying within the church, often sharing Jesuit history, not interested in causes or worship. The failure of Catholic institutions — schools, colleges, and hospitals — to continue as Catholic is to the Roundtable as serious a crisis as sexual abuse, and it set out to rebuild by focusing on better management in touch with reality. Diocesan-wide foundations are one model they endorse (see Philadelphia). Yet the reality that is too controversial for the Roundtable to deal with is the lack of male celibate priests, which members recognize privately.

The fourth organization, FutureChurch, comes off well because it stays within the church and yet looks for ways to address the problem that McDonough sees as most crucial: the need for more priests, likely to be brought about by strategies like those adopted by that paragon of effective

change, John Courtney Murray. FutureChurch is practical, action-oriented, and loyal. McDonough mischaracterizes its initial public position on women's ordination, but is very positive about Sister Christine Schenk, now retired and, as many of you know, replaced by an excellent new team led by Deborah Rose-Milavec. Oddly, the chapter has more about a Call to Action annual conference in Milwaukee and a VOTF conference in Long Island than about FutureChurch. To McDonough, it's all part of "the fog of reform."

McDonough uses John Courtney Murray and the Vatican II change in positions on church-state relations as the paradigm of effective reform. Murray stayed fully within the church, used church documents and positions, and yet achieved reform based on reality. His ideological position was that Catholicism had to accept existence in democratic societies with many religions and not expect to be a state church.

Except for Murray, the first part of the book annoyed me profoundly because it identified conservative causes as having ideas, in order to neatly contrast them with the action orientation of the four studied organizations. Neoconservative Catholics with ideas "triumphed" with everything from the Moynihan report to welfare reform (except that Catholics use birth control and have abortions). McDonough moves on to managerialism, which anyone with a dysfunctional parish might want to read. Professionalized ministries cause different problems than control by pastors.

How Catholics "attached to parishes" receive various "interest and advocacy" groups is a question McDonough often raises. But he does not present actual statistical information; more often, he makes surmises about attitudes. One chart that is based on data compares the financial resources of various groups; the Knights of Columbus has more than a thousand times the assets of SNAP (154). That does a lot to explain the effectiveness of the groups.

This is a tossed salad of a book, with interesting diversions thrown in but no clear connections to the argument. I had the image of a pile of index cards with quotations from everyone from the Greeks to the newspaper — but then nobody uses index cards any more! Sometimes there is real humor: "The hierarchy tends to look on VOTF as they would the feral cats that prowl the ruins of Rome — a little creepy perhaps, surely impossible to befriend, and often vicious among themselves, but barely worth the effort of shooing away." The strangest analogy was near the end of the book, comparing the church to the Ottoman Empire and the Young Turks movement that replaced it, but McDonough does not anticipate any reform organizations succeeding against the Vatican Empire. He writes before Pope Francis, so sometimes he seems resigned to the Old Regime, and at other times expresses a hope that change is possible. In our Pope Francis moment, let us remember how entrenched those who do not want change have been, and hope that some alliance between reformers and Pope can really make a way through the labyrinth.

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YES! *continued from pg. 3*

God's teaching". If we are the flesh version of God as teacher of justice, isn't it exhilarating to know that people are waiting for us (even if they don't know it!).

If that weren't enough, the reading goes on:

*I, God, have called you for the victory of justice
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in
darkness..*

Is there any answer but "yes" to that? After all, God has "grasped us by the hand"!

The way does not have to be wearying or arduous even when we're bruised and broken or more smoke than fire. We can take on another year of witnessing, advocating, writing, listening, working hard for justice, in our specific case, for women's ordination in the Catholic church. The priest who spoke on the Sunday of the above reading mentioned how we are part of the earth (dust) and to the earth (dust) we will return, but, he reminded us, there is so much *sparkle* in between. Don't you love that word, *sparkle*? Isn't that what "yes" often feels like: sparkly? He also reminded us that in some cultures, people don't celebrate individual birthdays. Instead New Year's Day is everyone's birthday; all individuals are starting a new year of life together. To me, that feels like a collective YES.

One final affirmative: I was telling a friend about something I had learned at the Women's Ordination Worldwide conference this past year, something I had never considered before but has since made me view the Eucharist with new eyes. The speaker mentioned that "body and blood" may have different associations for men and women. For men, the words often connote wounds and death in struggle or battle but in women they mean bringing forth of fecundity and life. My friend affirmed that statement fully and took it further by relating a story about an Eastern Orthodox priest friend of hers. He was one of the most joyful, happy, positive people she had ever met. When she mentioned this to him and wondered if it had anything to do with his vocation which allowed marriage and children, he said yes but that was only part of it. 'You Romans,' he observed, 'are too fixated on crucifixion and death. We see ourselves as people of the Resurrection!' Now that's the kind of Yes that can take us through all the years of our lives!!

Ellie Hart *is a co-editor of EqualWRites.*

Wisdom's Feast: Sophia in Study and Celebration

By Marian Ronan, Susan Cole and Hal Taussig

30th Anniversary Edition Apocryphile Press
\$19.95

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engine)

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ambivalence, or at least anxiety, about the daughter the doctors assure her will be quite unlike her other children. Aggie is the abject, the other that ancient Christian teaching identified with the flesh and with motherhood itself, and which seventeenth-century Christian spirituality urged Guyart to reject. This dismissal of real motherhood—not the spiritual motherhood of the Virgin Mary, which Dunn also analyzes in depth—is a continuation of the Neoplatonic rejection of the body, sex, material, the earth. It wasn't so much the child being rejected as the supposedly inferior physical and emotional attachment. Asceticism was better. The fact that it harmed the real children was (no pun intended) immaterial.

It's to Dunn's considerable credit as a scholar and writer that she doesn't resolve this tension any more than she resolves the tensions within Guyart's own experience of motherhood. As we continue the feminist effort to transform the hierarchical binaries with which the church and Western civilization have burdened us, neither may we opt for easy resolution.

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A Vision of the Church *continued from pg. 5*

tion and sterilization as a means of family survival. In addition, it refuses to listen to the voices of women or recognize the difficulties many families experience.

Money donated by the laity also supports, among other things, lobbyists who work to stop extensions to statutes of limitations, and lawyers to protect clerics and bishops who engaged pedophilia and its cover up.

Of course, every institution has a good side and a bad side. However, the church refuses to recognize its shadow side and hides behind the very secular idea of religious freedom that it does not practice so it can continue to engage in discriminatory and ultimately, sinful behavior. Criticism is, therefore, defined as persecution. Those on the other side of the delineated altar must discuss the dark heart of the church in hushed whispers lest the "Fathers" hear and act. They must make endless allowances for bad clerical behavior. They must pretend that that they are being fed when they are really being annoyed by bad homilies, bad liturgies, and bad translations of liturgical prayer.

The hierarchy turns a blind eye to what is the "real" church to far too many people. They would rather conscientious objectors just leave and take their concerns elsewhere so that they can keep their own faulty vision intact. The truth is that the institutional Catholic Church is, was, and will be corrupted by power until the People of God put an end to it all. No one else within the institution will do it. Each one has far too much to lose. The People of God must cease to pay for their own persecution and realize that they are the church, and it is up to the them to develop a kinder, gentler church that resembles the forgiving, merciful Jesus rather than the arrogant, unjust, unmerciful Casesar. This is a vision worth working for.

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Scripture Reflections

Isaiah55:1, Amos5:24, John4:13-14

Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.

Water is a significant Easter symbol of life, healing and renewal. For those of us in the Women's Ordination movement WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual) is also "one of the oldest, feminist organizations in the world...an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith and justice..." founded by Diann Neu and Mary Hunt, women of vision and courage, steadfast in their commitment to inclusive theologies and rituals, and long-time leaders, guides and mentors of WOC.. and whom I love with all my heart!

Just before Lent, I had the opportunity to share in a beautiful WATER ritual on Sojourner Truth. Sojourner was born a slave, labored for four masters and she had thirteen children—MOST OF WHOM SHE SAW SOLD OFF INTO SLAVERY!! She tells us that when she cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard her.

Sojourner could not read, but she had people read the Bible and newspapers to her. She became renowned for her preaching and singing, and became a beloved figure in the women's suffrage and anti-slavery movements. With her passion against injustice, Sojourner believed that she was called to stir the waters, and inspired others to do the same... "I want women to have their rights, and while the water is stirring, I'll step

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into the pool...I am keeping the thing going while the water is stirring, because if we wait till it is still, it will take a great while to get it going again...I'm not going to die, I'm going home like a shooting star!"

At this glorious time of year, please stir the waters with us. Join us at our Holy Thursday and Ordination Day Witnessess. Together let's step into the pool while the water is stirring from the WOW conference and WOC's Fortieth Anniversary. Celebrate Gospel, Gender and Global justice. Take courage from what Sojourner preached, "The truth is powerful and will prevail!" ...Let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream! (Amos5:24)

Judith Heffernan is a member of the Community of the Christian Spirit and SEPAWOC Core Committee.

PLEASE SEND MONEY TO HELP US WITH OUR JUSTICE FOR WOMEN WITNESSES, EVENTS, AND, OF COURSE, EQUALWRITES (and any cards and letters you are inspired to write)!

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